

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-12 remain pending in this application. Claims 1 and 3-6 are rejected. Claim 2 is previously cancelled. Claims 1, 3-6 are amended herein to express the invention in alternative wording and to address matters of form unrelated to substantive patentability issues.

Applicants herein traverse and respectfully request reconsideration of the rejection of the claims cited in the above-referenced Office Action.

Claims 1 and 3 are rejected as obvious over Rudloff (US 3,848,296) in view of Drelich (US 3,873,411) under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). The applicants herein respectfully traverse this rejection. For a rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) to be sustained, the differences between the features of the combined references and the present invention must be obvious to one skilled in the art.

Claim 1 is amended herein to recite in alternative language that the fibers of the filter fabric are not merely separated by the fibrillating, but also fibrillated to create fibrillated individual fibers of the type shown in Fig. 2 of the present application. The claim now recites in pertinent part the following:

fibrillating the used nonwoven filter fabric
to which powder dust is adhered, said fibrillating
resulting in production of fibrillated individual
fibers;

separating said powder dust from the
fibrillated individual fibers; and
producing a nonwoven fabric from the
fibrillated individual fibers

Applicants respectfully submit that "fibrillation" is a term of art which describes the formation of fibrils on the fibers themselves. The Examiner's attention is drawn, for example, to U.S. Patent No. 5,983,469, wherein the process of "fibrillating" is described as resulting in "the formation of micro-fibrils on the surface of fibers as a result of mechanical abrading or splitting of the fiber." (col. 1, lines 38-40).

Applicants further submit that Rudloff lacks teaching or suggestion for fibrillating fibers, as claimed. Rather, in stark contrast thereto, it is sole object to separate into individual fibers, intentionally without "alteration or fatigue" of the fiber structure. (see col. 1, lines 46-48).

The secondary Drelich reference, cited merely for alleged teaching directed to recovery of fibers from nonwoven fabric, is similarly devoid of the claimed feature of fibrillating to create fibrillated individual fibers.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the rejected claims are not obvious in view of the cited references for the reasons stated above. Reconsideration of the rejections of claims 1 and 3 and their allowance are respectfully requested.

Claim 4 is rejected as obvious over Rudloff (US 3,848,296) in view of Drelich (US 3,873,411), and further in view of Merk (US 5,603,476) under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). The applicants herein respectfully traverse this rejection.

It is respectfully submitted that Merk, cited for teaching allegedly directed to adhering a chemical binding agent to a fabric, fails to provide what is missing in Rudloff and Drelich, discussed above. Thus, the proffered combination of references fails to teach or suggest all the claim limitations, as properly required for establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness. Therefore, reconsideration of the rejection of claim 4 and its allowance are respectfully requested.

Claims 5 and 6 are rejected as obvious over Rudloff (US 3,848,296) in view of Drelich (US 3,873,411), and further in view of Kruszewski (US 6,010,785) under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). The applicants herein respectfully traverse this rejection.

It is respectfully submitted that Kruszewski, cited for teaching allegedly directed to use of PTFE fibers for filter fabric, fails to provide what is missing in Rudloff and Drelich, discussed above. Thus, the proffered combination of references fails to teach or suggest all the claim limitations, as properly required

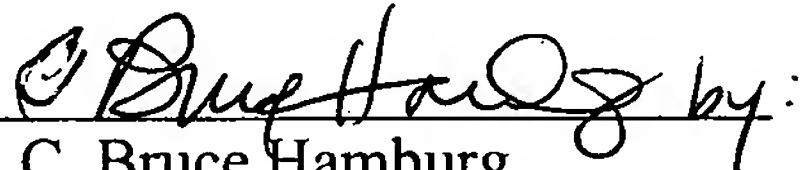
for establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness. Therefore, reconsideration of the rejection of claims 5 and 6 and their allowance are respectfully requested.

No fee is believed due. If there is any fee due the USPTO is hereby authorized to charge such fee to Deposit Account No. 10-1250.


In light of the foregoing, the application is now believed to be in proper form for allowance of all claims and notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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